

Silver Banner

Winter 2009/2010

Issue 70

Editor: Susan Jacobs

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Hilltown Assoc. of Councils on Aging is to provide and promote programs, activities and services to the senior citizens of the hill town communities of Becket, Dalton, and Peru.

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DALTON SENIOR CENTER NEWS

With the passage of the debt exclusion vote last month, the real work on the new senior center has begun. The Senior Center Building Committee has begun meeting to finalize the design and placement of the building on Field St. Ext. The committee has a lot of work to do if we are to break ground in the spring (Yes—that's Spring, 2010).

Members of the Building Committee are Chairman George Morrell, Vice Chair Mary Lamke, Recording Secretary Sue Jacobs, Tom Szczepaniak, Tom Renak, Carol Morrison, Maureen Mitchell, Bob Dean and Drew Finn. The meetings are posted and open to the public, and are held on Thursday afternoons at 4:30 in the Crane Room at Town Hall.

Hill Engineers, Architects & Planners was chosen to do the final design of the facility, and have al-

ready been hard at work incorporating the suggestions of the members of the building committee into their design proposals.

The type of construction has not yet been decided; all options are on the table—stick, panelized, post & beam and modular are all being considered.

Committee members are also planning road trips to visit other centers here in Berkshire County and beyond for new ideas, and to learn from those staff what works and what they would do differently.

Every effort will be made to keep this planning process as open as possible by providing frequent updates and answering questions.

[For more information, please turn to The Friends of the Dalton COA, Inc. article on page 3.]

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY IN DALTON

Dalton COA Annual Holiday Party

Thursday, December 17, 2009

Beginning at 12:00 Noon

Dalton United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall

Presented by

Friends of the Dalton Council on Aging, Inc.

Dalton COA

The luncheon will be sponsored by Craneville Place

For reservations, call 684-2000 by December 15th



HILLTOWN NOTES

Becket News (by Joan Moylan) It has been a busy fall starting with a very successful Halloween Party & Pot Luck. Building Inspector, Bill Gerard acted as judge, and costume winners received gift cards to local stores.

Speakers in November included Maddy Elovirta from the Becket Police Dept. (Senior Safety) and Stefanie Curry from the Becket Post Office (Mail Fraud).

Jim Kupernik, Dir. Of the Becket Ambulance also spoke in November. His motto is, "When in doubt, call 9-1-1." They are always there to answer your call.

Fire Chief, John Hall visited to talk about safety with wood and pellet stoves. Fires can start so fast if you don't know how to safely operate them. I thank all these speakers for the help they always give us.

Plans have been made for our annual Christmas Party. It will be held at The Knox Trail Inn, located in Otis on December 10th. Let's hope for good weather. We are also planning to go to the Russell Inn for another Christmas Party on December 22nd. We will also be having a grab bag, which is always fun. (The Becket Seniors are all about having fun, and that's what it's all about).

The only thing we have planned in January is a program by the famous, Dump Ladies on the 12th (snow date of Jan. 26th).

Remember: Brown Bag: third Friday of every month: and Pot Luck on the fourth Friday.

On behalf of the Becket Seniors and myself, we would like to wish everyone a safe and very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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**News from Peru** (From Barbara Lufkin)  
Merry Christmas from Peru COA

A group of enthusiastic volunteers has hosted three successful Pot Luck Luncheons here in our little town of Peru. The food was good, company excellent, and we

are looking forward to our next luncheon in January. Future luncheons will be on the first Thursday of each month at 11:30 a.m. downstairs in the kitchen area of the Peru Town Hall Building. Come and join us; meet neighbors you haven't seen for a while and meet new neighbors. Just come once and I'm sure you'll enjoy it and come again. Please don't stay home for lack of a ride; we have volunteers who will happily pick you up and then return you to your home.

Many, many thanks to Linda and Terri Kellogg and Jane and David Whiting for their help and moral support in getting these luncheons started.

We are very lucky to have as our SHINE counselor, Cathy Spinney from Hinsdale, who has already helped many Peru residents with insurance, fuel assistance, and other problems. Cathy has dropped in during the luncheons to meet and offer help to our senior residents.

The COA is looking forward to beginning an exercise program to be held at the Peru Town Hall. We are looking into classes in Yoga, and/or Tai Chi. We want a program that will accommodate the most of our members who have a wide range of physical abilities. We will keep you posted on developments.

Andrew Baker, Hilltown CDC's executive Director, met with us in December to explain the different programs included in the FY10 regional Community Development Block Grant which the Town of Peru is applying for with the towns of Cummington, Worthington, and Plainfield. These programs would be administered by the Hilltown Community Health Center in Worthington. This grant includes several good service programs for seniors and also programs for our young families.

## NEWS FROM DALTON



### **From the Friends of the Dalton COA, Inc.:**

(Marjorie Limburg, Pres.)

The Friends of the Dalton COA is a non-profit group whose focus is to support the work of the COA. The

quilt raffle (mentioned in the last issue) generated \$382 toward the purchase of a bench in memory of Pete Bardin. [The bench will be located at the Dalton General Store on North Street, one of Pete's favorite haunts.] Special thanks go to Maureen Mitchell who made and donated the beautiful quilt to the cause. Additional donations are still needed. Gifts in any amount can be sent to the Friends of the Dalton Council on Aging, Inc. at 400 Main Street, Dalton.

I want to thank everyone who turned out to support the Senior Center. The numbers of voters at both the Special Town Meeting on Sept. 28th and the Special Election on Nov. 16th were impressive. THANK YOU!

Now stay tuned for announcements of fundraising events we are planning to furnish the new senior center. We invite your input. If you have suggestions and/or an interest in helping, we'd like to hear from you. Our next meeting will be Jan. 6, 2010 at noon at the Dalton CRA. You can call me for more information at 684-1434. - *Marjie*

### **Dalton COA News.....**

#### **Bridges: An Intergenerational Adventure**

This year's series ended with a Pot Luck luncheon on Dec. 4th. The parents (and some grandparents) of the 4th and 5th grade students came to meet the seniors who had been working with their children each week. It was a good time of meeting "our" students' families and having a really delicious lunch. Many of those who volunteered this year have already signed up for next fall. Curious? Call Sue at 684-2000 for more information.

**Sunday Lunch:** The Host Groups of the Dalton Sunday Lunch program have been serving hot

meals in the dining room of the First Congregational Church since March, 1992—almost 18 years! The 1 PM meals have a "church supper" atmosphere, welcoming and friendly for all who attend. There is no reservation or charge, but donations are gratefully accepted. If you find Sundays to be lonely and one of the longest days of the week, come to Sunday Lunch for a delicious, hot meal and friendly company.

**COA Board Membership:** The work of the COA would not be possible without the guidance and hands-on assistance of the members of the Council on Aging Board of Directors. Here is an update of the changes that have occurred over the past year.

Tony Doyle left the board after serving almost 13 years, eight as chairman. He also served on the COA Building Committee as well as on the most recent Senior Center Feasibility Committee.

Helga Knappe served almost 17 years on the board. Helga brought Triad to Dalton, making us the first community in Berkshire County to have such a group. She was also involved in many of the COA programs, most notably with Serve and the Hilltown Assoc. of Councils on Aging, Inc. She is currently representing Dalton on the Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc. Advisory Council.

New members are Ralph Young, Jean Poor, Mary Martinelli and Caroline Dietlin. Other members are Mark Meunier, Chair.; Mary Lamke, V. Chair; Joyce Lacatell, Clerk; Cynthia Costello, Treas.; Marjorie Lillpopp, Marcia Brophy, Maureen Mitchell; Judith Brooks; Persis Caverly; Cora Cooney and Gordine Galusha.

These folks are an amazing team and a joy to work with every day. Thank you!

***(See information on the COA Van Service on page 7).***

## Taxpayer's Guide to Real Estate Exemptions in Dalton

(This helpful brochure is available at the Tax Assessor's Office, Dalton Town Hall, Monday through Thursday from 8 AM to 4 PM).

### Clause 41 C

#### Introduction

**A tax exemption is a discharge from the obligation to pay all or a portion of a tax. Exemptions are conferred by the Legislature on particular categories of persons or property.**

Clauses 41 C in Section 5 of Chapter 59 provides exemptions to persons 65 years of age or older who satisfy certain whole estate or asset, annual income and residency requirements. Persons 70 or older may, alternatively, qualify for an exemption under Clauses 17 D which provide reduced benefits but for which the eligibility requirements are less strict.

Clause 41 was an early Legislative response to the need of the above category of persons for assistance with their tax obligations. It set out original eligibility requirements for exemption. As property values and income levels rose, however, it became more difficult for persons to satisfy these requirements.

Therefore, the Legislature made alternative exemptions (Clause 41 B and 41 C) available for cities or towns to accept by town meeting or city council vote. Each alternative has different eligibility rules. If a city or town has not so voted, Clause 41 prevails.

#### Exemption Amount

The exemption amount for each Clause is \$500.00.

#### Applications

Applications must be filed annually on or before December 15 with the local assessors in the city or town where the property is located. If the tax bill is mailed after September 15,

however, applications may be filed within three months from the date the bill was first mailed. Filing an application does not entitle one for a delay in tax payment.

#### Documentation

An applicant for an exemption must provide to the assessors whatever information is reasonably required to establish eligibility. This information may include, but is not limited to:

1. Birth certificates
2. Evidence of domicile and occupancy
3. Income tax returns

#### Eligibility Requirements

For eligibility, an individual must satisfy requirements relating to: (1) age (2) ownership and domicile (3) annual income and (4) whole estate or assets.

#### Age

An individual must be 65 years or over as of July 1 of the tax year or the surviving spouse of such a person.

#### Ownership and Domicile

Under Clause 41, an individual must own and occupy the subject property on July 1 of the tax year. Under Clauses 41 B and 41 C, in addition to so owning and occupying the subject property, an individual must have been continuously domiciled in Massachusetts for the 10 years preceding the application and have owned and occupied the property or other property in Massachusetts for 5 years.

Ownership may be as a joint tenant or as a tenant in common with someone other than a spouse, in which case the exemption amount is the same proportion of \$500 as one's ownership interest in the property.

#### Annual Income and Whole Estate

Eligibility amounts for Clause 41 C as follows:

*(Continued page 5)*



## “Citizens’ Police Academy” a Success!

Due to popular demand, Sgt. Jeff Coe has announced the Dalton Police Dept. will hold another Citizens’ Police Academy in February or March 2010. This is an excellent crime prevention tool that focuses on community education and partnership. Citizen Police Academies offer people an opportunity to hear about the inner workings of law enforcement and the departments that serve their surrounding communities.

### Specifications:

1. Length of an academy will be 8 weeks.
2. The start date will be announced sometime in January. (Please call the DPD at 684-0300 or the Council on Aging at 684-2000).
3. Classes will be Tuesdays from 6 to 8 p.m.
4. All attendees will be pre-screened for sub-

stantial criminal records.

5. Topics will include Defensive Tactics, Drug Identification, Crime Scene Fingerprinting, Motor Vehicle Stops, Sex Offender Registry and related crimes, and Gangs.

Instructors from the Dalton Police Department, Berkshire County Drug Task Force/ Mass State Police and Pittsfield Police Department will give hands on training.

If you would like more information or are interested in attending, please contact Sgt. Jeffrey Coe or Officer Jonathan Bishop, our Dalton Triad officers at 684-0300.



### DALTON TRIAD

Triad is a three-way commitment among the local Police Dept., Sheriff and older or retired leaders. They agree to work together to reduce the criminal victimization of the elderly and enhance the delivery of law enforcement services to older persons.

A major purpose of Triad is to develop, expand and implement effective crime prevention and education programs for older community members.

Dalton Triad meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. at the Dalton VFW. The group receives crime updates from both the Dalton Police Dept. and Sheriff’s Office. Speakers are planned offering information on a variety of topics.

The education Triad members receive enables them to become additional eyes and ears for our Police Dept. to help keep our town safe. We encourage you to attend an upcoming meeting to learn more.



*(Taxpayers Guide” continued from page 4)*

Gross receipts minus social security allowance must be less than:

\$20,000 if single  
\$30,000 if married

Whole Estate less the value of the home except for the value of any portion which exceeds three dwelling units and produces income cannot exceed:

\$40,000 if single  
\$55,000 if married

### Calling all Knitters!

Interested in supporting our troops overseas? Marjie Limburg has directions for easy “Helmet Liners” for our men and women in Afghanistan. - Using worsted weight yarn and #10 needles, cast on 76 stitches loosely. K2, P2 for six inches. Cast off by K2 tog for the first row. Row 2: K across. Continue with these two rows until five stitches remain on the needle. Draw the yarn through with a large-eye needle and sew up the side. [If you have trouble with the directions, or have finished liners to turn in, please call Marjie at 684-1434.]





# Driving Safety for Older Adults

*(From "Aging in Stride" September issue).*

For most Americans, the automobile represents independence, control and mobility. We could not wait to get our first drivers license and be handed the keys to the family car when we were teenagers...and we'd like to keep driving as long as possible.

However, some of the normal changes of aging can make driving more challenging. Impediments to safe driving include hearing loss, vision problems, decreased reaction time, memory loss and lessened manual dexterity. In addition, the loss of depth perception and peripheral vision may narrow the margin of safety on crowded roads and highways.

Older adults should periodically assess their driving abilities, both to increase safety and to honestly judge whether they are still safe behind the wheel.

## Making Changes for Safer Driving

Here are ten good ways to improve driving skills and extend safe driving capability:

1. Take a refresher driving course for seniors. Classes on defensive driving for older drivers focus on specific strategies for dealing with the impact of the aging process on driving.
2. When filling any prescriptions, ask your doctor or pharmacist if your medications have any potential side effects that could hinder your ability to drive.
3. Have regular eye examinations, and keep your glasses prescription current.
4. Make sure your car is in good working condition. Have it checked for mechanical problems and other defects. Watch for carpet and pedal wear that could cause the accelerator or brake to stick, or a foot to slip.
5. Keep windows, mirrors, windshields, and wiper blades clean, as well as headlights, taillights and turn signals.

6. Have your tires regularly checked for low air pressure and excessive tread wear.
7. Make adaptive modifications to the vehicle itself for enhanced driving safety. For example: Improved side and rear-view mirrors; a back-up warning buzzer; steering wheel grips; and pedal adjustments.
8. If the car is large and difficult to maneuver, consider trading it for a smaller car, which might be easier to handle and park.
9. To avoid the most challenging driving situations, investigate route and time of day adjustments. If night vision has diminished, schedule car trips during daylight hours. Busy highways and rush hour traffic can be avoided with some advance planning and allowance for additional travel time. Boarding buses at Park and Ride lots can eliminate driving in the most congested areas.

## Checklist for a Safe Car Trip

Whether you're going to the market or on a vacation trip, here are some things to consider before you turn the key:

- Plan your route before you leave, and then stick to that route.
- If you're uncomfortable driving at high speeds, avoid the freeway. Just allow more travel time for your trip.
- Try to steer clear of rush hour traffic and congested areas.
- Buckle up! Everyone in your car should wear a seatbelt. (Remember: Airbags are supplements to seatbelts, not substitutes).
- Make yourself visible by turning on headlights in poor weather, even during daylight hours.
- Always use turn signals to indicate your intentions. And be sure your signals stop blinking after you've turned. *(Cont. pg. 7)*

## ELDER SERVICES— COMMUNITY HOUSING OPTIONS

What happens to you if you can't completely care for yourself? Do you have to go to a nursing home? Not always! There may be a community housing option that can help.

**The Congregate Housing Program** offers shared living in subsidized housing. Residents have comfortable private rooms which they can decorate to their own taste. The rest of the apartment is shared by the house mates, including the kitchen, dining room and living room.

Congregate Housing serves individuals in Berkshire County who are age 60 and over. It also serves disabled persons between the ages of 18 and 59 who qualify for subsidized housing, and would benefit from a living arrangement that offers professional as well as social support.

Congregate residents must be medically stable, not require 24-hour care and be able to live safely with others.

**The Group Adult Foster Care Program** provides assisted living to low-income elders age 60 and over and to disabled persons between the ages of 21 and 59. A qualifying individual must be eligible for Medicaid and SSI-G, and have a medical condition that re-

quires daily assist or supervision with activities of daily living.

Participants in the Group Adult Foster Care Program benefit from the support services offered in an assisted living facility. Elder Services offers this program at Rosewood Assisted Living Facility.

The Community Group Adult Foster Care Program can offer similar assistance to individuals who reside in a subsidized housing complex anywhere in the county and are eligible for Medicaid.

Participants in both programs receive professional monitoring by a registered nurse and social worker. For more information on eligibility and availability, call Elder Services at (413) 499-0524 or 1-800-544-5232.



*(Driving Safety, cont. from pg. 6)*

An unintentional signal could result in an accident.

- Look in your mirrors frequently, and always use a head-check to check your "blind spot" when changing lanes.
- Maintain a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you.



- Avoid distractions by keeping radio volume low and conversations to a minimum. And of course, even if your state allows cell phone use while driving—don't!

### Dalton COA Van Service

The Dalton COA operates a lift van Monday through Thursday. The service is available for all Dalton residents age 60 and over and disabled of any age.

Reservations for rides must be made a minimum of 24 hours in advance. The majority of trips are for medical appointments, but you can also do your banking, go to the hairdresser or barber, shopping or other needs. We transport within Dalton and to Pittsfield. If the schedule allows, we will also go to the Berkshire Mall.

Trips to scheduled COA activities (lunch, exercise class, etc.) are \$1.50 each way; all other trips are \$3.00 each way. Payments are made to the COA office.

For more information, call the COA at 684-2000.

Phone: 413-684-2000  
 Fax: 413-684-4033  
 Email: dcoa@bcn.net

400 Main Street  
 Dalton, MA 01226

HILLTOWN ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS ON  
 AGING, INC.

*Marcia Brophy, Dalton  
 Helga Knappe, Dalton  
 Sonny Nelson, Becket  
 Joan Moylan, Becket  
 Barbara Lufkin, Peru*

**Board of Directors**

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## PROGRAMS & EVENTS IN DALTON:

**FOOT CLINICS:** 9-4 at the DALTON CRA on Tues., Jan. 19th & 26th; March 23rd. Call the COA to book an appointment. Fee: \$25.

**BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC:** Third Thursday at Grace Church, 10:30 am to noon.

**OIL PAINTING CLASSES:** Tuesdays, 12:30-3 PM at Dalton CRA. Instruction Fee.

**LUNCHESES:** Mondays and Thursdays at noon, Grace Church Guild Hall. Make your reservation at least 24 hours ahead.

**"VETERAN OF THE WEEK"**, from the Veteran's History Project shown Saturdays on Channel 16, Warner Cable.

**MAH JONGG**—Fridays from 10:15 AM to 12:30 PM. Come and learn, or organize a table of experienced friends to play. Call 684-2000.

**SERVE:** Order by 1/11 for 1/23 delivery; order by 2/15 for 2/27 delivery; order by 3/15 for 3/26 delivery.

## "BREAKFAST CLUB"



Who doesn't like a yummy breakfast with a very social group of people? This popular monthly event is held at the CRA and includes a walk (weather permitting), breakfast and a speaker or other program. Upcoming Friday dates are: Jan. 22nd—speaker Gina Isenhardt from Home Instead Senior Care on "Nutrition Tips & Recipes for Seniors"; Feb. 26th and March 26th (speakers TBA). Call 684-2000 early to make your reservation.

Ahhhhhh.... One of the many things no one tells you about aging is that it is such a nice change from being young.

